



Web and email access in a typical Sutton school

All Sutton schools are protected by a central web filtering system called Webscreen which has been written specifically for the education sector.

Most schools in Sutton have two networks which are filtered at different levels, one for staff and the other for pupils. Although there is a standard filtering policy for each network the majority of schools have their own policies which define which web site pupils can and can't reach.

For example, social networking websites have lots of content that is useful in school but there is a great deal of adult material too. They are blocked in most schools but some secondary schools permit them. Schools control their own policies and the only sites which the Local Authority block for everybody are adult sites, email services and proxy sites which allow access to the first two. External email is blocked because we invest lots of time and money into ensuring that email for staff and pupils is very well protected, so allowing access to alternatives would potentially let in undesirable content, security threats and circumvent the work we do in detecting bullying and abuse.

All pupils have access to email when their school decides the time is right. Some schools operate their own email systems but the email still passes through our automated scanning systems to ensure it is suitable.

We look for bad language and slang in four languages and spend a lot of time each day ensuring that spam and scam email messages are stopped before they reach the inbox. We also look for evidence of people grooming children by email. At the time of writing only around 20% of the two million email messages we handle each month is legitimate, the rest is rejected as spam or because the content is not acceptable. We also scan messages for adult images and prevent certain types of files, such as music files or ones which might contain viruses. This kind of filtering happens out on the Internet before messages arrive on our email servers.

We also have specially written software running on our email servers which looks for a smaller range of content, typically bad language but also other more specialised keywords. We expect pupil's language to be polite at all times and temporarily turn off email accounts of pupils who are abusive. The use of these tools has on many occasions allowed us to spot when pupils are being bullied via email or are suffering some form of abuse. When we see this happening we contact the member of staff in the school who is responsible for pupil's welfare. Over the years we've had a lot of success in identifying children who have been bullied and abused and helped them overcome it.

Although the ways individual Sutton schools run their Internet services differ quite widely, we seek to ensure that pupils are protected from exposure to inappropriate material and that when something does get through it's fixed as quickly as possible.

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